

Adulthood

113

a blanket of leaves and cut up with bamboo knives.* The joints are cut with adzes. The mode of butchering differs considerably from the European technique, as the pig is divided in line with the jaws into a ventral and a dorsal half rather than along the backbone into a right and a left half.

A hunter who has killed a pig may eat none of its flesh himself lest he sicken and die. This restriction is parallel to the one placed upon the yam planters. The Kwoma believe that when a man kills a pig his own blood enters the animal; hence to eat its flesh would be to eat his own blood, an act which has the consequence of causing sickness and death. A man therefore uses the pork for one of the following purposes: to provide food for his family and relatives; to discharge a ceremonial obligation to a relative; to give a goodwill feast at his house tambran to which all members of his cult section (*Yenama* or *Minjama*) are invited; to provide food for one of the regular cult or age-grade ceremonies in order to gain prestige; to give a feast for the members of the sorcery court if a relative is sick; to provide for the second funeral feast for a deceased relative; to provide food for a work bee; or to trade with the river people for shell money. In the event that the pig is to be used for a feast, the whole animal is contributed and a soup is made in several large pots. What is not eaten is distributed to those present at the ceremony. If, however, the animal is to be given to relatives, there are specific rules which govern what part of the animal shall go to each of them. The *maternal uncle* receives the hams; the *paternal aunt* gets the second joints of the fore legs; the *sisters* are given the shoulders and brisket; *paternal uncles* receive the brain case and upper jaw; and the *brothers* get the hind trotters. The remainder—the backbone, hind and fore flanks, and the entrails—is kept by the hunter to provide meat for his immediate family.

This description of the use to which pork is put indicates that a man does not learn to hunt pigs in order to satisfy his

* Although the Kwoma now have steel knives, they prefer bamboo ones for butchering.

224
[412]433
224
262
[826]

[601]

224
602[178] •
[412]

Supernatural Beliefs

213

not follow from the source specified. This could be expected¹²¹ to result, through the operation of the principle of extinction,⁸⁶⁹ in a weakening of the habit of heeding this particular warning and in a functional discrimination between realistic and unrealistic dangers.¹² The fact that these unrealistic warnings are sanctioned by the community normally prevents such an event from occurring. Pupils are punished for not heeding warnings about *marsalai*, ghosts, sorcery, or blood, as is illustrated by the following case. Kwiya and Fit each bought a harmonica from me and began playing it around their house. Their mother warned them that this would bring ghosts. Neither of them heeded this warning, so the mother took matters in her own hands. She scolded them both severely and forced them to return their harmonicas to me. An even more striking case, perhaps, occurred when Mundik,¹³ a youth who had not yet received his keloids of manhood, attended a funeral ceremony, thus ignoring the warning about the danger from the *marsalai* of the cult to those who are not yet initiated. Mundik was attacked and beaten by the members of the cult, and, after being tied hand and foot, was thrown into a near-by dwelling. Had it not been for our presence he might well have been killed. [626] [123]

Since social sanctions are, in the last analysis, responsible for the maintenance of supernatural beliefs, an inquiry might profitably be made into the problem of why parents take the time and effort to force children to heed warnings. It may indeed be asked why they even issue these unrealistic warnings. A detailed answer to the above questions is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a few suggestions can be made. In the first place, since the teachers have been brought up in Kwoma culture they do not distinguish between realistic and unrealistic dangers as such. Hence they believe that if a [626] [123]

¹¹ See chap. vii, p. 192, n. 30.

¹² If a response to a generalized cue does not achieve a reward, but the response to the original cue continues to do so, the organism learns to discriminate between the two cues and to react only to the one which leads to reward. See E. R. Hilgard and D. G. Marquis, *Conditioning and Learning* (New York, 1940), chap. viii. [113]

¹³ Mundik was a Yelagu who was staying with relatives at Kwoma.

121 pupil does not heed an unrealistic warning he will be injured
 869 just as surely as, and perhaps even more severely than, if he
 • 178 ignored a realistic warning. Why they wish to prevent the
 child from being injured is a complex problem, involving
 identification, loss of help and support, and sanctions against
 negligence. The important question is why, if parents make
 their children heed unrealistic warnings in order to prevent
 them from being injured, does this habit not extinguish when
 they observe a child experience no harmful consequences
 when he disregards a supernatural danger? The following
 case of the extinction of a supernatural belief indicates that
 this is a real as well as a logical possibility.

121 Mar and Gwiyp had both been warned not to eat sago
 869 flour washed by a female lest it make them sick. Before they
 178 started to work as our houseboys they had heeded this warn-
 252 ing and each had worked with one of his *sisters* in the process
 262 of extracting sago flour. They had washed the pith while the
sister crushed it. When they began to work for us, however,
 we demanded their services in the mornings, when they would
 otherwise have gone to the swamp to replenish the household
 flour supply. Awa and Kwiya, the *sisters* who had hitherto
 worked with them, had no other available *brothers*, and there-
 fore formed a team of their own. They took turns washing and
 crushing and, of course, produced flour washed by a female.
 Mar and Gwiyp were somewhat hesitant about trying this
 flour, but they were faced with the dilemma of either going
 without flour, which had been a staple in their diet since
 weaning, or ceasing to work for us, which would have meant
 losing frequent gifts of trade goods as well as some prestige.
 They chose to risk disregarding the warnings about the food
 and hoped that the flour would not be like other bad food
 they had eaten and which had made them sick. Their parents
 scolded them for this behavior and warned them again. Since
 no other painful consequences resulted from their first at-
 tempt, they decided to try it again, and, for the remaining
 six months of our stay, they and the rest of their household
 ate this supposedly harmful food. After the first few occa-
 sions their parents stopped scolding and warning them.

Supernatural Beliefs

215

Thus, not only can the supernatural fears of pupils extinguish, but so also can the fears of the teachers become reduced in the same way, so that they no longer maintain these beliefs by sanctioning them. (21) 869 178 •

The fact that Kwoma children can learn not to heed, and Kwoma parents to stop issuing and sanctioning unrealistic warnings, raises a serious question. Why does this not occur more frequently? Why, in the course of time, have not all these supernatural beliefs disappeared as a result of this process? The answer to this is suggested by one of the basic postulates of the functional theory of anthropology. Parents continue to issue unrealistic warnings and to sanction them because they form an integral part of one or more systems of beliefs, customs, and organized activities which, as a whole, satisfy a social need.¹⁴ [82]

The belief in *marsalai* forms a large part of the charter¹⁵ of the yam cult.¹⁶ *Marsalai* are believed to be present whenever this cult holds a ceremonial meeting and to bless those who participate. In playing the instruments of the cult, the members are producing a representation of the voices of these beings. After a ceremony, no man who has attended may have intercourse with his wife, because the powerful and dangerous influence of the cult *marsalai* still clings to him, and might injure her. Thus, were the belief in these monsters to disappear, the Kwoma would be forced either to provide a new *raison d'être* for their cult ceremonies or to give them up altogether. It is not necessary here to present a detailed account of the functions of the cult, but a few of them may be mentioned to show how important this institution is in Kwoma society. The most direct function of the cult seems

¹⁴ See B. Malinowski, "The Scientific Basis of Applied Anthropology," *Reale Accademia D'Italia*, XVIII (1940), 22. [113]

¹⁵ Every institution consists in part of the traditional purposes and reasons for its existence which are believed by the members of the personnel. Malinowski has called this the charter. See B. Malinowski, "The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLIV (1939), 852-951. [113]

¹⁶ The personnel, norms, and material apparatus of this institution can be gathered from the descriptive chapters. The charter and functions are stressed here because of their importance in this context.

220

Becoming a Kwoma

121 The distribution of pork to rela-
826 tives also serves to cement kinship bonds. The belief that a
182 person should not eat yams which he has planted, because of
[602] blood contamination, results in exchange planting and thus
[262] strengthens the coöperative bonds between relatives. Finally,
[582] the beliefs in blood strengthen the rules of incest and exog-
amy, since it is thought that children of parents with the
same blood are not likely to be strong and healthy.

869 Kwoma beliefs about *marsalai*, ghosts, sorcery, and blood
121 are thus seen to be not isolated unrealistic fears, but theories
182 which are enmeshed and intertwined with many of the impor-
tant institutions of the culture.²¹ It is consequently under-
standable that a Kwoma teacher should insist that a pupil
learn these beliefs and that he should tend to disregard evi-
dence that they are unrealistic. The pupil, too, experiences
many of the advantages which these beliefs entail, a fact
which aids the teacher in the task of inculcation.

121 Although the above analysis gives an answer to the ques-
179 tion of why these unrealistic fears do not extinguish, it raises
• 178 an equally serious one: How can such fears ever extinguish?
In other words, if culture is integrated and functional, how
can social change ever take place? The case of Gwiyap and
Mar suggests one possible answer to this question. The belief
that sago washed by women is not good to eat has the func-
tion of making Kwoma men do their share of the work of
extracting sago flour. In other words, it supports an equi-
table division of labor in this phase of Kwoma economic life.
The presence of the ethnographer, introducing trade goods
which were highly prized by Gwiyap and Mar, their *sisters*,
and their parents, introduced a disturbing element into this
adjustment. Mar and Gwiyap were willing to take the chance
of becoming sick, their *sisters* were willing to do more work,
and their parents were willing to let the customary division
[123] of labor lapse in order to obtain these trade goods. Without
intention, or even awareness of the event until after its occur-
rence, the ethnographer, by introducing a new form of wealth

²¹ Supernatural beliefs, on a cultural level, are similar to neurotic symp-
toms in the individual, in that both are based on unrealistic fear, both result
in secondary gains, and both resist extinction.

Supernatural Beliefs

221 121
177
178
[23]
121
869

and providing a new means of earning it, had set the stage for the extinction of a supernatural belief.

In sum, a number of factors seem to be responsible for the inculcation and maintenance of supernatural beliefs and practices. Kwoma teachers, having repeatedly warned their pupils concerning real dangers, are enabled to use this technique to teach their pupils to avoid dangers which do not exist. To make these unrealistic warnings more forceful, they describe the supernatural dangers as being similar to the real dangers from which their pupils have experienced pain. Imitation also plays as important a rôle as in the transmission of the other aspects of the culture. Despite all these forces which lead a Kwoma pupil to respect supernatural dangers, the effort and deprivation frequently involved in carrying out magico-religious rituals tend to make him omit them. Since such omissions would soon lead to the extinction of these habits, the sanctions of society, as implemented by punishments from his teachers, provide the ultimate force which prevents the pupil from discovering that these dangers do not really exist and do not have to be avoided. Finally, the teachers themselves continue to inculcate these beliefs because they are integral parts of institutions which as a whole are necessary for the satisfaction of the basic and acquired drives of the constituent members of Kwoma society.

[p.222 is blank]

796
[534] sized trunk of a tree hollowed out and open at both ends. It is hung bottom up in the water and struck with a long heavy post wielded by two men.

The outline of another similar pit which has been filled in was seen beside the one now in use. This I was told had leaked badly. The new one has to be filled from any of several bamboo containers stuck under the banif quite often.

[346]
[798] In the house tambaran there is the same altar set up in the center with
[534]
[532] a small amount of shell money, two stubby bamboo flutes, and a wooden trumpet on top. Above it rises a 3' carved wooden figure of a woman. This is the woman for whom the ceremony is held. There is also a secondary figure under the water drum less important than the one on the altar. These two are sugiliwas of the tug sib (Bangus).

Between 30 and 40 men are present when we arrive in the early afternoon.
[535]
[533] They are singing and half-walking, half-dancing around the water gong
[534] counter-clockwise. The gong keeps up a steady boom-boom-boom with few interruptions even when new beaters relieve those who are tired. The men drop out from time to time to smoke or to chat so that no more than half are dancing while we are there. Later on in the evening we are told this is not so; everyone is dancing almost continuously. But the sun was hot and there were still many men to come, so it was being taken easily. Men from all of the Hongwan sib are present and also a few men of Koriassi and Koriassi Tangwishamp. Only four of these were "savi talks". These four, however, were the regalia of a homicide which seems to point to the fact that killing for prestige still goes on in spite of government prohibitions. These men may have won their letter in the prearranged fight with a small hamlet of Koriassi about three years ago. Six of the latter, four of them women and children, were killed then. (We haven't got this story straight yet for we have only recently stumbled on it).

648
657

The Yellow River station is being closed because it is a very unhealthy place and the natives are few. And there is another gold rush on over behind Uwak, so all the men that can be spared are needed there.

114

We were much less interested in governmental affairs than in whether the pinnace had brought us mail. When Max left us the next day, he crossed two carriers with a big pile of it for us. Its bulk was due to six weeks daily issues of the Sydney Morning Herald. All of the first week in November's copies were missing, but in the last issue we had, that of Nov. 12th, we found that U.S. stocks had been climbing 'since Roosevelt's election'. Then we sent the natives packing and sat down for an afternoon of finding out what our friends and relations had been doing all summer.

We had been planning to leave here on the 20th to spend Christmas at Ambunti. First however, we were going to Yambon to spend four days

648
[439]
[178]
[173]

tracing down connections between these people and ours. They traded with them long before the white men came, getting cowrie and sea shells from them as they do today; in myths, the Yambon people are thought to have come up one time with some of our Mongwan; and the Kwoma people hid the Yambons fifteen years or more ago when the government was up here straightening out the villages with rifles and fire.

114

The day before yesterday we had a note from Veray, the Police Master at Ambunti, saying the Assistant District Officer Ellis was sending up a pinnace for the four of us to come down to Angoram for Christmas. Ellis is the man who is the boss of the whole river, so we think this is a sufficient call to allow us a few days leave. Thus we will go to Ambunti tomorrow to meet Ellis on his way down and then go to Yambon for the following few days until our transport arrives.

Cordage manufacture

283

[192]

The bark of the mbinga tree is peeled off in short strips (one to two feet long). These strips are beaten on a stone with a wooden beater (an ordinary stick about two inches in diameter and a foot long). This breaks and loosens the outer shell of the bark and leaves the fibrous inner bark. It is then put in the sun to dry for a few hours. Next it is separated into small fluffy tufts. The tuft is rolled downward on the thigh with the palm of the hand. Another is similarly prepared and the two are rolled down the thigh separately but with the same motion of the hand. The hand is then brought back and the two are rolled together in the opposite direction. During this last movement the hand is twisted so that the index finger rather than the palm effects the twining. Two tufted ends are left over to which new tufted pieces are added and the process is continued.

Twine dyeing

386

824

[245]

[17]

[178]

Twine is dyed by fastening one end of the twine to the big toe and rubbing a raw berry held between thumb and finger back and forth over it. The berries used for dye are from two trees, kisindi and nowi, the former producing a dark blue color and the latter an orange red. Men plant the nowi trees near their houses by inserting the fruit in the ground with a digging stick. The Germans brought the seeds of this to Ambunti and it was brought to the Nongwue through Yambon. (Yambon is a river tribe). Before this the red dyeing was done with red clay.

286

386

The net bags worn by women and used for carrying are made from twines dyed red and blue, as well as from natural colored twines.